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Testimony of
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Government Administration and Elections Committee
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Common Cause urges you to reject Raised Bill 1146, an Act Concerning Cross Endorsements. Common Cause strongly supports fusion voting as a system that opens up the ballot for candidates to clearly express their views and for voters to express their preferences more clearly. Fusion voting has been part of our voting history in the United States since the late 1800's and early 1900's.

Fusion voting, or Open Ballot Voting, as some call it, allows voters to focus on issues and helps to refocus elections away from personality contents to allowing voters to focus more on issues and values. Fusion voting allows multiple political parties to nominate the same candidate for the same office. The candidate that receives the most votes still wins the election, but the voters that support a minor party endorse candidate, like the Working Families party, can demonstrate that support by voting for that candidate without fear that they have thrown away their vote.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, seven states permit fusion voting, including Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Mississippi, New York, South Carolina, and Vermont. In those states, a candidate may receive the nomination of more than one party. Fusion only occurs during the general election and does not affect the primary process directly. Typically, the major parties nominate different candidates, while minor parties may cross-endorse one of the major party candidates or run a candidate without any cross-endorsements, depending on their own political judgments and principles.

We have seen a dramatic increase in unaffiliated voters in states across the country, as voters grow disenchanted with the two major parties. But third parties still struggle to gain a foothold in states because voters believe that voting for a third party candidate means casting your only vote for a candidate that has little hope of winning, or for a candidate who is spoiler candidate. Fusion can improve our democracy by increasing the role of third parties, but it will not change the fact that our election system is biased towards providing a choice between only two major candidates with a realistic chance of winning. Fusion voting is not a threat to the two party system, but it can help strengthen and facilitate the engagement of third parties in our state.

Fusion voting can engage non-committed voters who do not want to vote for the Democratic or Republican candidates. It does not cost anything, it can mobilize voters, allow for the expression of underrepresented views and it can improve competition. We urge you to reject this bill.